



Federal Emergency Management Agency

IMPACT

A newsletter for the employees of FEMA

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Year ends with ice and snow, though 2000 was not the agency's worst



Photo by John Shea

Ice storms in late December left much of Arkansas and other states in the dark as trees downed countless power lines.

Passage of a national mitigation law, a growing disaster prevention initiative and a flawless Y2K rollover headed a list of FEMA successes in 2000, while the nation survived a busy hurricane season without costly consequences.

Last year also started with FEMA dispelling the Y2K doomsday seers and ended with the agency securing landmark legislation to better

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FEMA NEWS BRIEFS

Washington, D.C. A new FEMA headquarters building has been selected, just a few blocks from the current site. The new building, at 550 12th Street, SW, will be completely renovated to agency specifications, and will include such amenities as protected parking, an auditorium and space for a state-of-the-art national Interagency Emergency Operations Center. FEMA is scheduled to move into the new building March 2003.



Washington, D.C. A federal survey on customer service in the government has found FEMA's customer service satisfaction number higher than both the government-wide results and comparable private-sector results. The number, however, a satisfaction rating of 73 percent, was the same as the agency received last year. The survey questioned disaster assistance recipients.



Atlanta, GA. Severe weather alerts will be flashed almost instantly to every public school in Tennessee, thanks to a mitigation grant program funded by FEMA and the state of Tennessee. The grant program, administered from FEMA's Region IV is worth \$300,160. Under the program, computers in all schools in Tennessee's 95 counties will be linked to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration weather alert system.



Washington, D.C. FEMA released the final report of America Burning Recommissioned, America at Risk. The report, first issued in 1974, focused attention on the nation's fire problem, the needs of fire services and allied professionals and resulted in the creation of the US Fire Administration. The new report reached two major conclusions: the frequency and severity of fires in America are a result of the nation's failure to adequately apply and fund known loss reduction strategies and that the primary responsibility for fire prevention rests with state and local governments.



Washington, D.C. FEMA met its agency goal for the 2000 Combined Federal Campaign, with a total contribution of \$155,000 from employees. The campaign benefits thousands of charities in the U.S. and abroad.

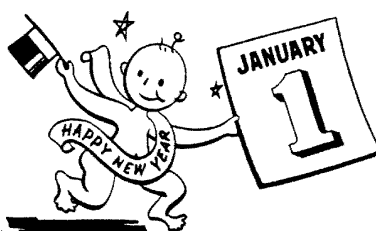


Boston, MA. FEMA's Region I recently joined the US Department of Education and hosted a One America discussion with 200 students at the Jeremiah E. Burke High School in Dorchester, Massachusetts. The discussion, moderated by Setti Warren, the regional director, addressed the issues of diversity and unity in public schools. The two agencies are launching a State Youth Task Force pilot program involving about 20 students. The task force will identify and address issues about school safety. ▲

Employees talk about the best New Year's resolutions they ever kept, mostly

Ben Curran, Voluntary Agency Liaison:

I've kept my resolution for the year 2000 by going "unplugged," getting rid of my television because it's such a waste of time. Since doing so, I've noticed even more how dependent so many people are on their TVs. They say, "Oh, I keep it on for the company," "No, I can't go out I have to watch my favorite show" or, my favorite, "Did you see that ad. Wasn't it great? it really made my day." Good grief!



Marc Wolfson, Public Affairs Officer:

Every year, with all the holiday goodies around to tempt me, I gain weight over the Thanksgiving to New Year's Day season. This used to bother me and I would always make a New Year's resolution to lose the weight. Since this weight gain has become an annual event, I have learned not to worry so much about it and just enjoy the holiday season — goodies and all! Just knowing January and my resolution to lose the extra holiday pounds will be waiting for me allows me to have those extra treats guilt-free.

Bonnie Butler, Chief of EMI's Mitigation Branch: I find that, unless I exercise in the morning, the day gets away from me and I don't make time to exercise at all. I know that regular exercise is important for my health, as evidenced by my grandmother who used to walk a mile to and from work everyday and just had her 100th birthday in August! But I hate noisy gyms and even videos don't relieve the Nordic Track tedium. Last year, Mary Leslie, from the U.S. Fire Administration, mentioned that she loved walking in the early, early mornings. So I began getting up at o-dark-thirty and walking under stars. Fortunately, because I live in the country, it's quite safe and there's no traffic. What delights me most are the clear mornings and when the

moon's still visible and the stars seem tangled in the branches of the trees. Everything is calm and quite. It's a very meditative time.

Janet Odeshoo, Deputy Director of Region V. I made four New Year's resolutions last January. One was to keep my desk here at work clean and to stop piling up documents promis-

ing myself to read them later. I kept that resolution about three days! Another resolution I made was to never complain to my husband. That one lasted about three hours! My third resolution was to reason with, rather than yell at, my three-year-old daughter. That resolution lasted about three minutes. I am pleased to report that I have so far kept, and intend to continue to keep, my fourth resolution — not be involved in any planning for Y3K!

Joe Bills, Training Specialist: I've never kept any. I don't make them. I know that I wouldn't keep them anyway.▲



Ad Council lends its creativity in support of Project Impact

The Ad Council, the organization behind such enduring slogans and characters as “A Mind is a Terrible Thing to Waste” and Smokey Bear, has selected *Project Impact* to conduct a major national public service advertising campaign in concert with *Project Impact*’s communities and corporate partners.

“Their slogans and characters are more than memorable — they raise awareness, inspire action, and save lives,” said Cynthia Ramsay Taylor, the initiative’s public affairs manager.

The partnership with the Ad Council will bring extensive resources to *Project Impact*’s public education efforts. Throughout the three to five-year campaign, *Project Impact* will have access to a comprehensive organization of media, corporate and advertising volunteers.

Industry volunteers that support the Ad Council’s efforts will donate market research services, creative work and media placement for the campaign.

“The public service cam-

paign provides *Project Impact* with a valuable way to reach the largest possible audience with this message,” said Taylor.



In addition, the capacity to carry the themes into corporate partners’ own market-

ing efforts will be central to the public education campaign.

“The Ad Council’s support of *Project Impact* will further FEMA’s objective to institutionalize disaster resistance into everyday life and expand it beyond a ‘government program,’” she said. ▲

Two federal agencies join Project Impact

FEMA has linked with two long-time partners, the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) and NASA, which pledged their support last year for *Project Impact*.

The USGS pledged to provide FEMA with critical earth science information on natural hazards including earthquakes, floods, volcanoes, wildland fires, landslides.

Project Impact has long sought to coordinate its efforts with other federal agencies. A recent FEMA report on the nation’s earthquake risk, for example, used USGS seismic hazard data to create a national picture of earthquake risk.

The NASA agreement will bring updated and more accurate maps of floodplains, a better understanding of wild-fires and maps to improve disaster recovery and mitiga-

tion.

The first cooperative activity under the agreement involves mapping floodplains around Los Angeles, San Francisco and Sacramento, Calif., Virginia Beach, Va., and the Red River along the North Dakota and Minnesota borders.

Local communities will benefit from these precise maps by better understanding the physical characteristics of their communities.

At the same time, NASA scientists will gain valuable data for technology development, validation and calibration of satellites, and the understanding of land use and flood hazards.

The National Flood Insurance Program also will benefit from the accuracy of these new maps, which will provide more precise views of flood-threatened areas. ▲

“(The Ad Council’s) slogans and characters are more than memorable — they raise awareness and inspire action.”

Third Project Impact Summit keeps enthusiasm alive

Challenge goes out to recruit 1,000 new communities

More than 1,400 citizens, business representatives, public officials, media and emergency managers from communities across America convened in Washington last November during the third annual *Project Impact* Summit. The summit was, by far, the largest ever. The first summit, held in 1998, attracted 840 participants.

The summit brought together participants from across the country to share their community's success stories and the lessons they've learned about how best to prevent disaster damage.

The summit officially opened on Monday afternoon with a general session that included remarks by FEMA Director James Lee Witt as well as Rep. Earl Blumenhauer. Rep. Blumenhauer discussed the connection between citizen involvement in *Project Impact* and improving the livability of communities.

During the opening plenary, Witt shared his vision for the national growth of *Project Impact* — including the challenge of adding 1,000 *Project Impact* communities during 2001.

Under the new plan, new communities will be able to join under a streamlined acceptance process.

Other highlights of the summit included the Tuesday

night, NASCAR-themed fun night. Participants mingled with several NASCAR drivers who serve as spokespersons for *Project Impact*.

Also during the summit, Witt signed Memoranda of Understanding with new corporate and government partners, including the United States Humane Society and Coleman Powermate. Coleman Powermate immediately demonstrated its commitment to the new partnership by donating generators to the star communities featured during the summit.

On Thursday, during the "Sustaining the Momentum" lunch, Witt and Ambassador Craig Johnstone of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce signed a Memorandum of Understanding that will work to engage businesses in communities across the country. *Project*

Impact partner VISA then announced that it would contribute \$300,000 to the U.S. Chamber to support this effort.

The summit also featured a daily "newsletter" with event



Dr. Kenneth B. Taylor, a hazard mitigation officer from North Carolina, responds to questions about the HAZUS software.



Sports caster George Michaels interviews driver Tony Stewart at the Project Impact Summit "NASCAR Fun Night."

reminders and summit information, an exhibit section and workshops ranging from how to promote public education to the basics of a successful mitigation buy-out project. ▲

FEMA supporters put a good word into the agency's soon-to-be released history project

The History Project, a three-CD package tracing the roots of the agency and highlighting accomplishments and changing focus also includes interviews with a range of people who have supported FEMA over the years. Here is a sample of those interviews:

James Hunt, Governor, NC: “I served as governor during the late ’70s and early ’80s when governors were prone to speak of the federal disaster programs as disasters themselves. They took a long time to come about, there was very little cooperation, and the paperwork and bureaucracy and red tape was just horrendous. I have seen FEMA go from being the most criticized program in Washington, at least by the nation’s governors, to being the one that is perhaps praised the most. It is an amazing transformation.”

Barbara Boxer, Senator, CA: “(Before FEMA), we were ready to say that all disasters should be handled by the military – that’s how desperate we were; that’s how heavy the bureaucracy was. That’s how unfeeling the bureaucracy was and how ineffective it was. We were just on the cusp of saying, ‘We can’t do it this way any more. We need to have people who understand that there’s a mission and the mission has to be accomplished, and people have to be helped.’”

Frank Keating, Governor, OK: “I think the training of the personnel in the FEMA teams — whether they’re from Miami, Dade County, or from Sacramento, wherever they may hail — the training is first-rate. And the attitude of the people is first-rate, as well.”

Jerry Uhlmann, Director, Missouri Emergency Management Agency: “Having a good, strong federal agency certainly makes it easier for all of us at the state level. And the same way we look at it for the local communities – if we’re strong, we do a good job at the state level; that

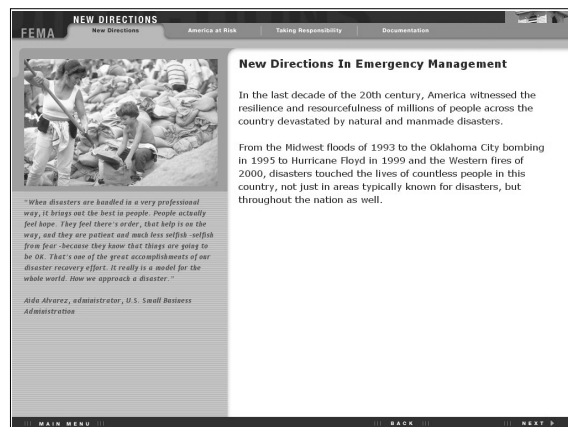
enhances the locals as well. Emergency management is really at the local level, and that’s what we try to achieve.”

Aida Alvarez, Administrator, U.S. Small Business Administration: “(W)hen disasters are handled in a very professional way, it brings out the best in people. People actually

feel hope. They feel there’s order, that help is on the way, and they are patient, and they are much less selfish — selfish from fear, because they know that things are going to be okay. I mean, that’s one of the great accomplishments of our disaster recovery effort.”

Robert Berdahl, Chancellor, University of Berkeley: “I think that the whole area of pre-disaster preparedness and investment and mitigation is an area that I would encourage FEMA to continue to look at, even though it is much more difficult, obviously, to pry money out of Congress for those sorts of things than it is for emergencies after they’ve happened.”

Dale Bumpers, former Senator, Arkansas: “FEMA’s . . . been a howling success because it began to coordinate all the agencies; and it takes all the agencies, most of the time, to solve the problem.” ▲





FEMA Profile: Steve Sharro

After a decade as the second in command at FEMA's Emmitsburg training facility — and 25 years as a trainer — Steve Sharro is now the director of training for the agency and head of EMI.

His promotion follows the resignation of former EMI Director John McKay.

While Sharro is excited by his new responsibilities, he's humbled as well.

"I've been blessed to be deputy to two really great people," he said. "They're two tough acts to follow."

One of his first major pushes will be to make EMI training more performance based — a process that has been underway for some time. Sharro said he'll be more aggressive in this direction.

"It's easier to have someone stand in front of you and tell you everything they know about the federal response plan than how to know how to ask for help and get the materials you need during a disaster," he said. "But we need people who can hit the ground running in a disaster and to *do* not just to *know*."

He is also focused on using "accomplished performers," experts who can share what makes them succeed, when shaping classwork. In addition, Sharro wants to modernize facilities and equipment at EMI, including a switch from old technology to new.

"We won't have overhead slides anymore," he said. "Everything will be video and computer."

Sharro also plans a changed educational

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Steve Sharro

approach that will use more case studies and instructional games to help adult learners absorb information and become accomplished. Sharro said his long history as a trainer gives him an edge.

"I'm the first trainer ever to be superintendent at EMI," he said.

Emergency managers, planners, firefighters and military personnel as well as elected and appointed officials such as mayors and city managers from across the nation attend a variety of courses at Emmitsburg. The courses help prepare these officials to deal with disasters ranging from earthquakes and hurricanes to chemical spills and terrorist attacks.

Prior to joining FEMA, Sharro served in a variety of leadership positions with the Department of Defense, both in the United States and in Europe and Southeast Asia, including a final assignment as the deputy and acting director of education for the U.S. Army Europe.

Sharro is a graduate of Indiana University of Pennsylvania, the Army War College and the Federal Executive Institute. He holds a master's from the University of Southern California. ▲

The 2000 hurricane season: The terror that wasn't

The 2000 Atlantic hurricane season ended with only two named tropical storms making landfall on U.S. soil — the first year since 1994 that the nation went unscathed by a significant hurricane, and a far cry from last year when five such storms pounded ashore leading to a record 19 major disaster declarations.

Statistically, the season itself was exceptionally active, spawning an above average 14 named storms—three more than predicted at the outset of the season last June and two more than in 1999. Eight of the storms become hurricanes, three of which were of Category 3 strength or higher.

Those numbers compare with the 1950-1990 averages of

9.3 named storms and 5.8 hurricanes, with 2.2 of these at Category 3 or greater.

The difference, of course, was where the storms went — and where they didn't.

Only one of this year 2000

The difference, of course, was where the storms went — and where they didn't.

storms, Tropical Storm Helene, prompted a major disaster declaration after coming ashore on September 22 slightly west of Fort Walton, Fla.

The storm, preceded by Tropical Storm Gordon's mild strike on Florida's Gulf Coast a week before, dumped 10 inches

of rain on the state's panhandle, resulting in nine counties being declared for federal aid to repair damaged infrastructure.

Florida also hosted another tropical-related event the following month when a strong low-pressure system brought record rains and flooding to the southern part of the state before becoming Tropical Storm Leslie in the western Atlantic.

Four counties were subsequently declared for aid to flood victims, including swamped Miami-Dade. With more than 51,600 people already applying for assistance and FEMA funding approaching the \$100 million mark, the event rates as the most costly disaster so far this year. ▲

New Year cont.

protect the nation from future disasters.

The year 2000 accomplishments included:

- ◆ 62 new jurisdictions joined *Project Impact*, bringing the number to 249 nationwide;
- ◆ *Project Impact* corporate partners climbed to more than 2,500.

In 2000, FEMA also:

- ◆ Responded to 43 major disasters, involving 33 states and the District of Columbia.
- ◆ Authorized 65 fire suppression grants covering 17 states, including one of the worst outbreaks of wildfires in the western US in recent years.
- ◆ Obligated \$552.1 million in disaster funding through November, the first year since 1991 that such annual expenditures were less than a billion dollars.

According to FEMA disaster statistics for 2000:

- ◆ The Miami floods in October ranked as the year's most costly disaster, with more than \$160.5 million in FEMA funds committed.
- ◆ Other significant FEMA disaster recoveries included the winter storm that hit states in the South and Mid-Atlantic in late January (\$92.7 million) and floods that struck North Dakota in June (\$55.4 million).
- ◆ Alabama and Ohio led the nation with three declared disasters each, followed by two each for the District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky and Montana.
- ◆ Flooding, the most common occurrence in 2000, was involved in 22 of the year's declared disasters, winter storms in 13, tornadoes in eight, fires in three, and earthquakes in one. ▲